

Senator Hatch was a friend, a respected colleague, and a legislator of rare skill. In our 20 years serving together, our disagreements were frequent. They often ran deep. But I always knew him to be a person of good faith who put the needs of his State above all else.

While nobody ever mistook Senator Hatch for anything but a principled conservative, to his credit, he was never afraid to work with his Democratic colleagues when necessary to get things done, and he would make compromises. I was in the room many times when it happened, and I will always admire him for that.

The people of Utah lost a titan this weekend, one that will not likely come through this Chamber again for a long time. My prayers and condolences go to all of Senator Hatch's family and friends, especially his wife, Elaine, and their six children and many, many grandchildren.

May he forever rest in peace, and we thank him for his lifetime of public service.

NOMINATION OF LAEL BRAINARD

Madam President, today, the Senate gavels in for the start of a 5-week work period, and there is much, much that the American people want us and need us to work on in order to lower costs and improve their daily lives. That will be one of our primary focuses. The Senate will also continue confirming President Biden's administrative and judicial nominees.

Today we will vote to advance the nomination of Lael Brainard to be Vice Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Ms. Brainard received bipartisan backing in the committee, and I expect her to sail through this Chamber with similar bipartisan support.

NOMINATION OF LISA DENELL COOK

Madam President, as soon as tomorrow, the Senate will proceed on the nomination of Lisa Cook to sit on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Coming from humble beginnings in rural Georgia, where her family fought racial segregation, Ms. Cook would make history as the first Black woman ever to sit on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Her qualifications are irrefutable. She is a professor of economics at Michigan State, a member of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago Advisory Board, and served as senior economist in President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers. In short, Ms. Cook absolutely belongs on the Fed, and I look forward to the Senate confirming her soon.

NOMINATION OF ALVARO M. BEDOYA

Madam President, this week, the Senate will also confirm Alvaro Bedoya as a commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission, breaking a 2-2 deadlock on the FTC that has lasted for over a year. Mr. Bedoya's confirmation is truly significant. If we want to lower costs, if we want to understand why the price of things like gasoline have surged, then it is important to

break the 2-2 deadlock at the FTC so it can fully examine these issues and execute its agenda.

Every time Americans go to the pump, they just know something truly rotten is going on with America's energy sector. Last year, the top 25 oil and gas companies reported \$205 billion in profits. Earlier this month, ExxonMobil alone reported its highest quarterly profits since 2008. But has any of this translated into lower prices for Americans? Has any of this gone to help resolve our energy challenges? Has any of it gone to increasing worker productivity? No, no, and no.

Instead, soaring energy profits have fueled soaring stock buybacks. In the fourth quarter of last year, oil and gas companies' stock buybacks rose by more than 2,000 percent—2,000 percent.

They are making record profits, and what do the CEOs do? They artificially increase the value of their stocks simply by buying some of it back. That is not why stock should go up.

Could they do something to reduce prices? Wouldn't that help America more? Could they do something to make their oil companies—their workers fare better? No. There is something deeply wrong, deeply wrong about seeing the largest oil and gas companies in the world drench top executives and wealthy shareholders with cash while Americans are struggling at the pump.

That is why we need a fully functioning FTC as soon as possible; so it can look under the hood of America's energy sector and determine if rising prices are, in part, rooted in shady conduct, and I believe they are. For that reason, we must confirm Mr. Bedoya by the end of this week.

And I say to my Republican friends, if you are complaining about oil and gas prices—gasoline prices, one of the best things to do is have the FTC take a look and propose action and act.

On this very same note, Democrats are also discussing and will consider other potential action to beef up the FTC's ability to crack down on potential gas price manipulation. We will have more to say on this as the week progresses.

UKRAINE

Madam President, also in the coming weeks, the Senate must make progress on several pressing legislative priorities. We must, for one, continue helping the people of Ukraine in their fight against Russian aggression.

Last Thursday, President Biden announced the emergency funding Congress approved in March is close to running out, and he is expected to make another request to Congress later this week. Two months into the war, Putin's hopes for a quick takeover have all but extinguished, thanks to the bravery of the Ukrainian people and to the aid that the U.S. and other countries have provided the Ukrainians in the form of Javelins, Stingers, and other critical weapons.

But as we all know, the fight is far from over. We must make sure the

Ukrainian people continue to have the help they need for as long as they need it. Approving additional aid for Ukraine is a must, and I expect swift bipartisan cooperation to get it done.

NOMINATION OF BRIDGET A. BRINK

Madam President, this morning, the President also announced he will nominate Bridget Brink to serve as the next ambassador to Ukraine. Ms. Brink's nomination is terrific news at a critical moment, and the Senate will prioritize her confirmation once she comes before the Senate and move her as quickly as possible. She is needed, and we will not tarry or delay.

The United States has not had an ambassador within Ukraine since 2019, and Ms. Brink is an excellent choice to lead our diplomatic mission as we stand with the Ukrainian people. She is a longtime veteran of Eastern European affairs and has already been confirmed unanimously by the Senate to serve as ambassador to Slovakia. There is no reason both sides can't work together quickly and expeditiously to confirm Ms. Brink.

CORONAVIRUS

Madam President, in addition to Ukraine funding, I will also keep working with my colleagues to pass another bipartisan COVID funding package. At the end of the last work period, a group of Democrats and Republicans reached an agreement on a funding package, only for every single Republican to vote against moving forward—every single one. Truly disappointing, because this funding is desperately needed.

The best way to keep life as close to normal in case a new COVID variant arises, is for Republicans to work with us to quickly approve more money for vaccines, more for testing, more money for lifesaving therapeutics, and other urgent tools to fight the pandemic.

The longer that Senate Republicans hold out on working with us to approve new funding, the higher the cost will be for our country down the line. As we have learned already, it doesn't take much for a new variant to undo a lot of the progress we have made in recent months.

So in the coming weeks, both parties must come to the table and reach a good-faith agreement to move forward on COVID funding.

It will be vital for keeping schools, churches, businesses, and our communities open if and when a future, more potent variant rears its ugly head.

AMERICA COMPETES ACT

Madam President, finally, this week, the Senate will also begin a formal conference committee with the House to finalize our jobs and competitiveness legislation. If there is anything that Republicans and Democrats should be able to agree on and move speedily on, it should certainly be a bipartisan bill that increases jobs, boosts innovation, and gets tough on the Chinese Communist Party, while shoring up our chips manufacturing here at home.